



From Super-Macho To 'Pure Femininity'

Eleanor Schuler, Now a Demure, Middle-Aged Writer,
Used to Be a Scientist, a Double-Agent, and a Man

By Judy Bachrach

Marine-Blue shadow halves the eyelids. They do not lower under heavy scrutiny. They do not do anything but stare back, questioningly but without anxiety.

"What do you think?" she asks, for she really doesn't know if she is pretty. "Judging from the number of men that chase me..." The low voice trails off. Voices do not change very much, even when everything else does.

What you think cannot seriously be called thinking at all. The mind speeds uncertainly past a check-list of vital signs: makeup by Revlon, melon-colored peasant blouse with a long, full rust skirt, large purse by her side which someone should have warned her against, nail polish too pink for this season. She crosses legs that are long and slender with enviably small ankles.

"I don't wear pants," she says with earnest emphasis, for gravity is her trademark and possibly her refuge. "I don't want to compete with men on any level. I don't want to be in the spy business. Anyone who's gone through this is proud to be a woman. I'm not going to be a woman's lib-butch-type aggressive woman."

No, Eleanor Lorraine Schuler has not just completed a course in Fascinating Womanhood. She has lived one. Once she was a double agent for the FBI, packed a gun and was responsible for the expulsion from this country of a Russian embassy official who was charged with spying.

Once she was a man.

When she was a man she was called John Humink, and had a wife and four kids who lived in the suburbs. All this finally ended about two years ago, when he left his wife and children, underwent a sex-change operation, altered name, social security number, profession, sexual preference—in short, altered an entire life as a he—and became a she.

"What you see here," she says, dispassionately and without pride, "what you see here is pure femininity. It's nothing I was taught by my mother, or anything like that."

What you see here is a demure middle-aged lady (her mood sinks visibly at the observation on her age) who now checks anxiously into the mirror for blemishes. What you see here are a pair of arms—not the arms of an average woman, but lightly muscled and angular, terminating in large hands with big knuckles, their size emphasized by a huge amethyst ring. What you see here, in other words, is a question mark.

And the question is—What is a woman?

It never crosses your mind to ask Eleanor Lorraine Schuler that question. Virtually alone among us, she has no doubts about what she is.

"No, I wouldn't sleep with a man on the first date," She shakes her head for emphasis. "The longer a man waits, the longer he gets to know a person, and the more of a bond there is."

"I'm not a prude at all. It's just that I feel sex is better with a good relationship."

What you see, finally, is not exactly what you get. Eleanor Lorraine Schuler's boyfriends do not yet know what she once was. "It's gonna freak them out," she says—no doubt with perfect accuracy. "But we've learned that when boyfriends or potential husbands discover



Today, Eleanor Lorraine Schuler, left;
formerly, John Humink, above.

this, it makes no difference. Because they fall in love who they see."

And what you see has been helped along.

"She always picked out her own clothes," says Alice Humink. "We may have looked through catalogs together. I might have said, 'This would make a nice looking evening gown.' Or, 'This would make you look more slender.' That kind of thing."

And Alice Humink was in a great position to figure out the lady's tastes. She was married to her for 20 years.

"You believe what you see," Alice Humink says simply. "It's like a plainclothes policeman. They pass... Eleanor is attractive, tall. And she has a reasonably nice figure."

But two months into Eleanor Schuler's reincarnation

See SCHULER, B2, Col. 1

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By Ken Felt—The Washington Post

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Eleanor Schuler: From Macho to Femininity

SCHULER, From B1

the eldest child saw her father. And this is what she has to say about her: "Eleanor looked like a little old lady. Over made-up. She always, always, always wore skirts. At first I thought—'She's just learning about makeup. Give her time.' It occurred to me she wasn't developing the proper ideas of what femininity was all about."

"The only girl I ever dated, I married," says Eleanor Schuler. "I did everything that was expected of me. I have a genius IQ—over 180. I was in the Boy Scouts. I was a clarinet player in my (Anacostia) high school band."

Shrewdly, matter-of-factly, she responds quite often to unasked questions, and by anticipating them, defines the interview. "The principal reason I've come public now is I want to explain the disorder of gender, and because of the shocking reality of my two lives," Eleanor Lorraine Schuler says flatly.

"I think she wants a lot of free publicity," her eldest states just as flatly. Yvonne Arnold is a rather skeptical 18-year-old, now married ("One of the reasons I moved out was because of Eleanor"), and now questioning the motives of the woman who is her father. Eleanor Schuler has written a book about her experiences as a transsexual, which is why Yvonne Arnold says, "Right now his latest scheme is to become rich by selling the story of his transsexuality."

"She wants to go to Hollywood, to New York and make deals..." "I hope it fails. Because I don't want to be associated with it," continues the daughter. "I think it's going to hurt me in the long run."

"You know in the few articles I've read about transsexuals, they always say, 'The children adjusted beautifully.'"

"Well, the children DIDN'T adjust beautifully."

When John Huminik Jr. told his eldest daughter he was leaving home and going to become a woman, Yvonne was in her last year of high school.

"It worried me at first," she says now. "Eleanor told me there was no way it could be inherited. But at that point I didn't trust her enough to even believe her."

"So I started asking around discreetly. And I was asking myself, 'Do I feel like a man? Do I feel like a woman?' Then I said to myself, 'No! I'm a woman!'"

Eleanor Lorraine Schuler says, "I have four children, and they all understand. They live their own life. They're normal. It's not contagious or hereditary..."

From earliest childhood, from earliest memory, she says she knew she was female. "So I behaved as much like a boy as I could... At the end of high school I met my future wife. It was a real ordinary courtship."

Alice Huminik agrees. "We went to each other's proms. He was always the orchid-guy. Always gave me orchids." She chuckles lightly. "Now I know why. Orchids have no odor—John was always allergic."

Yes, says John Huminik Sr., yes, his son had "all the allergies you can think of. Milk, feathers... Now the allergies are mostly gone, we've noticed."

"... He was a very good boy—always behaved. There were no problems whatsoever at any time. And he was very studious."

Later the father found out (because Eleanor told him) that when she was a boy, little John Huminik would secretly slip into his sister's clothes. Later, Alice Huminik knew that her husband was slipping (quietly, behind closed doors) into women's clothes. But all that was later. Much later.

"He had female clothes of his own," Alice Huminik remembers, "and he would just go into the bedroom and shut the door. Well, it was too risky during his spy days to risk going out in public like that."

Yes, Alice Huminik became aware of her husband's problems only toward the end of his FBI days. Double-agent, double-sex. Alice Huminik was worried enough for his safety. Now there was something much more complex to fret over.

"You know that book, 'I Led Three Lives?'" she asks with a little laugh. "Well, he led four lives."

Not, of course, that it started out that way. John Huminik son of John Huminik Sr. who played in the Navy band (and repaired instruments), went on active duty with the National Guard, then got into welding school with the Air Force, then joined the Army Reserve as a chemical officer, and was Commanding Officer of the 312th Chemical Company.

John Huminik married at 20, wore dark suits always, washed (this is his daughter's recollection) his car every couple of days, much to the astonishment of his neighbors.

John Huminik was den leader of the Boy Scouts. "But," says the oldest child, "I wouldn't say he was accepted. My father was always different from the rest of the fathers on the street. He was always a busy businessman and at the end he wasn't home a lot. Always transacting busy business."

"I was always trying to be a doer," agrees the father. "In your idle moments your gender speaks to you the loudest. But no one in my past

could have felt I was feminine. Because my major goal was to kill that femininity if I could. I worked very hard as a male."

No one, as it happens, remembers John Huminik in the old days as anything other than a male. Reserved, gentle, homely and intelligent is how his subordinates from the Army Reserve days thought of him. Never made a pass at another man. Never aroused the slightest suspicion. Especially since one of the busy businesses John Huminik was transacting for six years was double-agenting for the FBI.

For free. For pay he was a scientist. Barely though he was of a college education, he took outside courses, and became vice president and senior scientist at Value Engineering in Alexandria, where he worked on high temperature coatings (which was a piece of valuable expertise when the space programs were hot). "I was a whiz kid," she says now, "that's what they called me."

And so the Russians got in touch with John Huminik, and he pretended to go along with them, met with them secretly until 1968 when the press blew his cover and Valentin A. Revin, the Soviet embassy's third secretary, was asked by the State Department to go on home.

For his part, Huminik wrote a book on the experience, appropriately titled "Double Agent." And it contains this intriguing paragraph: "A mass of people—including a generous dose of femininity—were busily moving in and out of the building, some to get a little quick shopping, others on their way to lunch. The sight of all that pulchritude made the wait for Revin very pleasant. The wind was quite strong that day, and all the girls were trying to brave the gusts and still keep their hairdos in one piece."

These days Eleanor Schuler says of her FBI experience, "Again, this was in keeping with my femininity. I wanted to become super-macho. I was also involved in the revolution at Santo Domingo which I can't talk too much about..."

But for Alice Huminik that, too was a very anxious time. "It was always a relief when the car pulled into the garage," she says, "and then there were things he couldn't tell me, that it was better I didn't know. I would say it was almost more frightening after the case broke as it was during, because there were diplomats who had to leave the country. The Russians could very easily have kidnapped him, expunged his life, and no one would have suspected."

Eleanor Schuler's former wife says that she's known about the sexual troubles for about 10 years. "At first it's a

shock. Then you take it day by day. I took a shorthand course. I kept so busy I didn't have time to think. I worked as a secretary. You just keep busy..."

"We never fought as such. We discussed it at great length, and he tried to make me understand his inner feelings. He encouraged me to find another male. But you just can't up and pull up stakes when people depend on you."

"I have mixed feelings. It's not jealousy and not exactly bitterness either. Do you mean did I resent the fact that perhaps I'd been deceived? Perhaps."

"But my feeling is more one of sympathy."

The ex-husband says, "We got along. We had children to raise and so we made the best of the situation. 'Neither of us had affairs. We went until it was time to change.'"

By 1975 it was time to change.

"Our home life was pretty bad the last two years," says Yvonne Arnold, who admits she could be a provoking adolescent. But she also says that during high school she worked for MacDonald's and that "once a month my father would ask me for a loan. He'd say, 'Can you loan me \$30—or

we'll never pay the rent.' I was always hearing, 'As soon as this deal comes through...'"

The father says, "I never took money from him." But there is one thing Eleanor Schuler does say, "I had my financial reversals. No question."

In 1963, John Huminik quit his old job and became president of Chemprox, a company that made household cleaning products—and that folded. He made "little investments here and there, and some I made money on and some I lost money on." He and others backed a thermo-electrical device. He and others invested in a loan shark charter. "But every one I owed money to was paid back," says Schuler.

So the eldest child looks at this new phase of her father's life rather cynically.

Already Eleanor Schuler, living here in Washington, has herself a manager, Anne Derzavis, who has helped her with hair, makeup, clothing and career. She's hoping to make a living for herself as a writer.

Already the book Eleanor Schuler has just written is at the William Morris Agency.

Already Eleanor Schuler is talking about auctioning the book, selling the movie, the bit-parts she might get on TV and in the movies.

Already she is working on another book—this one a medical explanation for the layman on gender reversal.

(It is Eleanor Schuler's contention that gender reversal occurs in the fetus.)

But in a way you have to agree with Eleanor Schuler when she says, "I wouldn't think anyone would go through a sex-change as a new event of life. It's a correction of a life's disorder. Maybe if I hadn't had an inner problem, I would have done things on a less spectacular level. But no one would do this as just another thing to do. You have to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you're a woman in your mind."

"All doctors will advise that if you can stay a man—stay. But my feeling was that it was no longer possible to stay a male. I was willing to commit suicide. I could tell that my instincts were speaking to me clearly."

Yvonne Arnold says, "We didn't know his confusion."

And she also didn't know her father wanted to kill himself toward the end.

"When people have a disorder and there's nothing to be done about it, they can live with it," says Eleanor Schuler.

"But when you know something can be done, it becomes intolerable."

But even when you know something can be done, you must also endure the seeming absurdity of your desires. We do not live in a society that admires women who were born women excessively. We do not, therefore, easily accept the notion that any man would want to become one. Above and beyond the anomaly of the situation, there is an automatic diminution of status involved, a final relinquishing of all the enviable prerogatives of being male.

"The dichotomy between men and woman is so great," says Eleanor Lorraine Schuler, "that for me to surrender and go to femininity was appalling to me."

And yet that is exactly what she ended up doing. Starting in 1975, she lived for a year as a woman, receiving hormones, watching her breasts sprout.

She went through puberty—the second time around.

She worked as a medical secretary because "I wanted to work in the medical field and to squash my masculine life. So I went to a typically female occupation."

In 1976 she underwent sexual surgery in New York and became, as her doctor, Roberto C. Granato writes, "a female for all practical purposes."

One of about 10,000 American transsexuals, is Dr. Granato's estimation. Six weeks after the operation, she had intercourse for the first time. (Doctor's orders, she says.) "I wanted someone who thought he was a superstud, a lady's man." So a friend fixed her up with an Army major.

He never knew.

She decided to keep her little secret to herself, forever. Thought better of it, later on.

She had a nose job.

She surrendered, all right.

"I cry, I cry. My emotions are free-flowing. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen."

She says this without special emphasis. You cannot imagine her crying.

"Now I'm more tuned into the environment, the sensitivity of life as a woman. I'm content with myself. I'm no longer in the wrong body. So now I can notice that the sky is blue, that the flowers smell pretty..."

What are the emancipated to make of this new-born woman? What are those who believe that most male-female attitudes stem from societal preachings to think of Eleanor Schuler when she says she wants her doors opened, her chairs pulled back by men? When she says that as John Huminik she was not attracted to men, but all that changed once her hormones did?

"I like intelligent men. I don't want sissies. Remember that I'm trying to be a proper female. So I'm not trying to compete with who opens the door. I'm trying to be a proper lady."

Her manager told her a bit about proper ladies. "Eleanor had to learn something very important. That women take up less space than men. That women do not pat their hair with the flat palm of the hand, but with their fingertips."

More than anything, Eleanor Lorraine Schuler wants to be the woman of her own dreams, dreams fashioned not by her early role models, but by the perception of a perception of what a woman should be. She is 42, the subject of a conscious reincarnation, and in many ways as unknowing of women as, say, a man.

She worries now about the men she'll be dating, "who know I've been a spy. When I've been much more macho than they are. He's going to have to be quite a man."

When she was a man, she says, she always had to fantasize herself a woman to achieve orgasm. Now she can have vaginal orgasms, since her prostate touches her vaginal wall. She cannot, on the other hand, have clitoral orgasms.

She has no scars—the surgery is perfect. Her breasts are not silicone implants, but the result of the hormones she takes. Her skin, she says, has always been soft. Her beard, never heavy, was finished off by electrolysis. She weighs 138 pounds.

Her measurements are: 36-28-37.